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KENYON COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Stories of Knox County

Karen Bush
Interviewed by
Mary Grace Detmer and Hannah Klubeck
On
April 2, 2017

Kenyon College

Oral History Project
Stories of Knox County

Interviewee: Karen Bush

Interviewer: Mary Grace Detmer and Hannah Klubeck

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Mary Grace Detmer: This is Mary Grace Detmer and Hannah Klubeck with the Stories of Knox County Project interviewing Karen Bush on her experiences with life in Knox County. Today's date is *April 2nd 2017* and we are speaking in the Armory Building at 1 Mansfield Ave, now the home of The Escape Zone. Thank you for your willingness to participate. Could you please state your full name and birthdate?

Karen Bush: My name is Karen Evon Mees Bush, my birthday is 10-1-1954.

MGD: How long have you lived in Mount Vernon?

KB: I've lived in Mount Vernon since 1972, I came as a freshman at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio.

MGD: How long have you been working in Mount Vernon?

KB: I graduated with an associates degree in 1974 from Mount Vernon, met my husband May 1st, we got engaged June 2nd and we got married July 27th, in the same year, in the same summer. Mount Vernon got its four year accreditation, so I stayed on and was a member of the first four year graduating class. The last two year graduating class and the first four year graduating class. My husband graduated in 1978.

MGD: How did you pick Mount Vernon Nazarene University?

KB: I grew up in the Nazarene church. I was kind of one of those kids that somebody picks up and takes to church, because my parents did not go. My parents wanted me to go to the University of Cincinnati and I really wanted to come to Mount Vernon and then it was just a struggling new school, it had just started in 1968, so one day I came home and my mom said, "Its go to Mount Vernon or you don't go to school." So that was kind of a big switch, I think the Lord did that, so I came to Mount Vernon and it was just a one horse town then, I think Southside diner was Perkin's Pancake House and that was just about the only place, my parents would come to visit me on a weekend and that was the only place we had to eat. So we had Perkin's Pancakes a lot.

MGD: Have you ever considered living anywhere else or moving?

KB: No. I think in the beginning we would have maybe moved back to Cincinnati, but my husband is a "townie" he grew up right across the street from the Naz on Aims Street and so

when I met him, this was his home town and I loved Mount Vernon, it meant a lot to me. It was a small town and so we just stayed.

MGD: How do you interact with the community beyond your work?

KB: That's a good question because I can remember we had a pastor come about fourteen years ago, and I was a member of the board and he said, "Now tell me where in your life you're touching the world, where you're making a difference." I had been working at The Escape Zone, my kids grew up there, but I worked at the Naz, so I had Christian friends and my friends were in the church, so I wasn't really touching the community too much except for at The Escape Zone. Then, when you start working at The Escape Zone, you start touching about everybody. I used to frequent the Salvation Army, they had a cafeteria they called "The Harbor" so I used to eat in there a lot on Fridays and during the week my husband and I would have lunch there. On Saturday mornings I would always go there and there were a lot of community kids and families that attended there, so I kinda got involved that way. The Curtis Mansion, I got involved a little bit with cleaning that before it became a historical home. As far as getting involved in the Kiwanis or that kind of stuff, The Escape Zone has pretty much been it for me.

Clara Roman-Odio: How did you get involved with The Escape Zone?

KB: In 1999, there was a group of concerned Christian people who wanted to provide a place for kids to be. You have to understand in Mount Vernon there wasn't too much to do. Kids would, when my husband was a teen, they would drive down Main Street, go around the square, go out to Clippies, which was out on Harcourt Road, another hamburger joint, and then come out, and Bex Point Drive-In was at the point there where Burger King is now. That was their thing to do. When I came here the kids would drive downtown, and take up all the parking spots and sit on the tops of their cars. So the people that were concerned about the kids started looking for a place. They started meeting in '99, in June 5th, 2000 they rented the storefront we were in for 16 years. My sons, I have four children, but my twin sons are 30 and they started attending The Escape Zone when they were 14 when it opened. I used to send them down there and stuff, and then sometimes I would go down and pick them up, end up going in and talking to the people that were there. One day they said, "Hey you wanna volunteer?" I said, "Yeah" and it wasn't too long before then I became the staff coordinator where I had to find the people. At that point it was open Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but as the years went on, those people, there were probably twenty-five names on the list that I was given, but those people started getting married, having children of their own, leaving town, or whatever. Pretty soon it became me and my sons who were there all on Friday nights and Saturday nights and I said, "We can't do this." There was a new president, and we just said we can't really staff that much time anymore. There's a wagon ministry that meets on Saturday nights it was for older kids and it starts at about ten pm so what was happening Friday nights we were open til eleven, we'd have kids seven to eleven, on Saturday nights, the kids would come in about seven, but around ten the older kids would leave to go to the wagon ministry. We said why don't we let the wagon ministry have Saturday nights,

and Sunday nights the Faith Lutheran Church had started volunteering and they said can we have our youth group here on Sundays. We said “Yeah let's do that,” and I’m not sure that that ever picked up a lot of our Escape Zone kids but it was still a ministry that was happening at our building. When Aaron Kester was the president, there were a lot of kids and we couldn't help them play sports. So Aaron talked to the YMCA, and they were at that point not having anything on Sunday at the West Chestnut Building, so Aaron asked if they could play basketball there, so Aaron developed a whole different side of the Escape Zone, this athletic side, and they started playing basketball, and to this day we still have people that play basketball on Sunday nights. Now they have moved here, they moved here a couple of weeks ago when we opened, but when the Y figured out they could make money on Sunday nights they asked us to move on (laughter). So the Salvation Army Gym opened up and that is where our guys have played for all these years until now and now they're coming back. Some of them are older men now after 16 years and some of them have moved on and they've picked up others, I was here last Sunday night and I bet there were probably twenty-five or thirty guys, they sign up to play on a team and then they rotate on and off and so that's been a different part of our ministry. When we would go to the gym, the Columbia Street Gym, we went there during the renovation for our fifteen year anniversary then we just spent about four months there before we were able to move to this building. That brought out a whole different group of kids, but it also hindered those who weren't athletic. At the gym, all we had were some tables and long chairs, so if you were playing jenga and a ball came over and hit your table, well that was the end of the jenga game. It wasn't conducive to talking, there just wasn't any space, it was the gym, we had the front room vestibule and that was it. Having being here, we have a ton of space, but making that useful.

CRO: You said that that was part of your ministry, can you expand on that?

KB: I told you that my pastor asked, “Where are you touching the world?” When my kids were little, and because there was this time that it was just me I felt very responsible that I had to be there and we weren't gonna be open, if I couldn't be there. I felt almost like I was a babysitter, like everybody in town is sending their kid here and I can't get a Friday night off (laughter). When my pastor Larry Hall said that to me it really, I started thinking about, are you really making any difference if you just think of this as a babysitting chore? So it became more of a ministry to where now I wanted to know their names and what's going on. One young lady, her name was Hannah, she was twelve, she was a cutter. She had been abused. She came and she would just talk to me all the time and became my ministry to her to go and visit her every day. We would go for a walk in her neighborhood, and talk. Her mother was basically living off her, she was probably getting social security or something for the trauma she had been through and basically that's what her family was surviving on, her sickness, her being sick. They moved out of town, back to where they came from and stuff but we have remained friends and she's in her 20s, is married, has a beautiful little girl. I can remember her saying to me, “Is my life ever gonna be normal?” You know that really touches your heart and you're going, “these kids need that.” So many of our kids they are great kids, they just don't have the best circumstances. I have

been doing this since my kids were fourteen so probably, well we've been open seventeen years, and then I've probably been here fourteen and a half of those. But it has been more of a ministry since my eyes were open to what are you doing here, what kind of difference can you make. It is really easy to talk to people about the ministry, we have had a lot of people. I ask my church all the time, pray for me. I have a prayer email list that has probably well over one hundred people on it, and it is not only people in our church, other people say, "Hey, can you put me on your list!" But I often will send them prayer requests for The Escape Zone, and part of it was this building. This building is a miracle, I mean it is a miracle. I think it is hard to understand, you know I don't make a lot of money, my husband doesn't make a lot of money, but when you see God's hand at work, do you care if I share some of those stories?

MGD: Please.

KB: When Aaron Kester became the president is kind of when I got mostly involved. Aaron lived right up here at 11 Mansfield Ave. In 2008 because of the downturn in the economy he lost his job, he lost his home, and he bought this rental up here and was gonna have to rent out the upstairs in order to make ends meet. We were sitting up there at a board meeting at his house and we had talked about this building, because it had been empty, and someone told us it had a gym, none of us had ever been in it, they told us it had a gym. We were saying how neat that would be, our Sunday night guys could come here and play basketball and stuff, but we just had no money. We really only live off the donations and the generosity of the people in the churches, and the people who had been involved at The Escape Zone over the years. So we were up there and someone on the board was from the Salvation Army and they said, "Well you could merge with our harbor ministry," but even though we served the same kids it was a very different atmosphere and rules and how to mesh that and stuff. So my son Jacob, who was then at the time a school teacher in Mount Vernon, he had just graduated from the Naz, said he would take over as president. I can remember driving down the street like, what are we gonna do? Three times that year we did not have enough money to pay the rent. I was in Kentucky and I received an email from the treasurer he said, "We only have money for half the rent what are we gonna do." I put out an email to my prayer chain, "We don't have enough money for rent, pray." The next Sunday I went to church, a man walked up to me who was only there every so often, he wasn't a regular attender, and said, "How much money do you need?" I said, "We need seven hundred dollars," he wrote a check for seven hundred dollars, we payed the rent. When I was in Kentucky I came home on a Sunday and I was in my sweats and stuff but we used to have Sunday night church so I went over to Sunday night church, and the head of the missions society said, "Karen we want you to come up here." I was thinking, "I'm in my sweatpants I don't wanna be up on the stage!" But he called me up and he said, "we wanna give you one thousand five hundred dollars for The Escape Zone." So he gave us a check for one thousand five hundred dollars, paid the rent, and half of the next months rent. The next time it was kind of like, what are we gonna do. I walked into church on a Wednesday night and a couple asked me to come into the sanctuary where we meet in the stone chapel and they said, "We can't do this all the time but we wanna do

this this once,” and they gave me a check for one thousand dollars. It cost us about fourteen thousand to fifteen thousand dollars down there to do that, so again, that paid for our month's rent. We kept saying, we would come to board meetings and say, “God is not finished with us yet, there is something he needs us to do, or this wouldn't keep happening.” Well, that got us through. Someone in the community lost their sister, she was a school teacher, and um, gave us the tithe off her life insurance policy, so it was like ten thousand dollars. We had never been given ten thousand dollars before (laughter). But every year we had to have an auction or a garage sale, and it had become to where you almost had to have a garage sale every three months in order to pay for that. So that ten thousand dollars, our budget was probably about sixteen thousand dollars for the year, so that shouldn't have even paid for a full year, but it lasted us for like four until we could get to the point where we got another, Marco Peterson was our president, he took over after Jacob moved out of town, so things began to grow and stuff, but we always had this smell at that building. When we had our fifteen year anniversary, and I was talking to the first president Melissa Midcap, she said, “That smell was there when we rented that building!” Ill let you smell those documents and you'll still smell it today. There was a distinctive smell, and that became a real issue for Marco, he felt like there was probably mold in the building, it had probably been there for a lot of years. For our fifteen year anniversary, the landlord, Marco had been talking to the landlord, and then Marco had decided due to some health reasons that he needed to step down, and Terry Walter who is the president right now took over. Well Terry was pretty gung ho about, we gotta get rid of the smell. He talked to the landlord and the landlord took up the floor and put down a new hardwood floor, but he never really took care of the issue, of the mold. We put in new ceiling tile, we painted, we did everything we could and it still smelled. The day we had our ribbon cutting down there for our kind of re-opening for our fifteen year anniversary the floor had already started to buckle from the moisture underneath. So Terry and Steve began to, Steve Dunges who was on our board, began to look at every piece of property downtown that was vacant. So they went to the, there's a music store down there it used to be colonial music, they call it Jet now, so they went over there and that lady was thinking of selling her building, one hundred seventy nine thousand dollars but it wouldn't be for a year, and of course we had no money, so that was kind of far fetched. They looked at every single building. We knew that Spi Spot was gonna move over the Buckeye Candy building, so we looked in their spot, and I was like, “This is not for us.” Their old place, this is not for us, it was too small. We said, I kept saying to Terry, “Terry can we see the Armory” and he knew Mark and he said, “Mark says we can't afford the Armory, it is gonna be too much of a renovation, I think it was the 4H people had looked at the building, maybe Junior Achievement, somebody, another youth organization, and they had said it would take one point six million dollars. Of course we were like, “We don't have one point six million dollars!” We began to pray. We started praying about our fifteen year anniversary so we had a group that met at my house and um we wrote down specific prayer things. We want Terry and Steve to be in contact with people that can help make a difference. Steve comes the next time to pray and he says, “You're never gonna guess. I sat down at lunch at the Naz cafeteria and who's next to me, Nancy Vail, she's on

the City Council and we got to talking about The Escape Zone, and she was all behind that.” And then Terry is walking down the street and Sam Barone crosses the street to see Terry and says, “I think we have some money for some equipment but we won’t give it to you in that building,” because they knew of the problems in that building. So Terry said, “I think we could get some money guys if we could do this.” I think Terry went to speak to the community fund, and he spoke to their youth part and they said they have two thousand dollars they’re allowed to give and they said they’d give one thousand seven hundred dollars for equipment for if you move into that building. We got two grants from the community fund, one was for twenty five thousand dollars one was for fifty five thousand dollars. I can remember going into The Escape Zone down there and we have a P.O. Box but Terry hadn’t told people that, and I’m usually the first one there, and I picked up the mail that they threw under the door, and here was a check for eighty five thousand dollars, I said, “We have got to tell people to use the box! Eighty five thousand dollars is sitting on the floor!” (laughter). That was kind of the beginning of the building. Then Ariel Foundation came in with one hundred fifty thousand dollars. I think to date we have spent only three hundred and eighty thousand dollars, to get it this far. The health department donated the microwaves, they donated some of the furnishings. They donated the volleyball standards and balls and stuff like that. Last Saturday we did what we call work and witness, which is our church has a missions outreach weekend, and so last April 2nd, a year ago today, was the first time we ever worked in this building. So they came and they cut down the trees in the back and that’s when we pulled down all the ceiling, I mean there was I don’t know how many lights, maybe fifty or sixty, lights that had to come down. All that stuff pulled out of here, so that was our workday. Well, last weekend, it was a year, but it was our missions weekend again. So we came in and Steve Duges was heading it up and they cleaned off the parking lot and they did, um. We have a bunch of college students that come on Friday nights, they came on Saturday too. I was over at the wreath store, I was gonna try to find a rake that we could get the leaves out from in front of the building, and I walked in the back and here were these tables, and they wanted \$15 a piece for them, and I had forgotten my phone out in my car so as I’m walking out the lady says, “You didn’t find anything today?” I said, “No I’m going to get my phone to see if I can take a picture of those tables back there.” So I took a picture and sent it to Terry and said can we get these tables. Now fifteen dollars a piece was a steal because they’re from the hospital cafeteria, we looked at the pricing for just those plastic ones that fold up and they were sixty dollars a piece, so Terry said, “Yes you can get them.” So before he told me that I went to the front desk and I said, “Look, I’m Karen Bush, I work at The Escape Zone, and I think we want these tables, can you hold them until I get a response back,” because Terry wasn’t always just hanging on his phone waiting to tell me yes or no. She said, “I think we can do better than that, I think we can just donate those to you,” and I said, “You would do that?” She said, “Yeah.” So our guys from the church came, they had trucks, go get four tables, and this was set up as 8 foot tables in this room and forty chairs, because that’s what someone, that’s what one of those churches had donated to us, real heavy tables and stuff. And so this place (the room we were speaking in) if you’d of come last week, was very different than it is this week because

of that. So those are the kind of things that have happened to us over the years, we had what we called the Champions for Life event, I was listening to Jim Dobson's radio program, "Focus on the Family," and Kimberly Anthony was speaking and she was the first black gymnast on the national USA team, and at the end, they said she lived with her family in Ohio. Her message was so neat about sexual purity and stuff like that and just what she had gone through, so I looked her up, and here she lived in Dayton and her husband Corwynn, he was a professional football player but he was the head of the pro athletes version of Athletes in Action, so we said, "Man, we would really like to have you come, how does it cost?" One thousand five hundred dollars, one thousand eight hundred dollars I think if Corwynn comes too, but you know we couldn't have them at our place downtown, so I went to the Naz and my boss happened to be over the different building use. He said, "If you can get some of the schools departments to sponsor you it is free." So we went to Athletes in Action, we had social work interns who actually interned with us on Friday nights, and they agreed, admissions agreed, we had the event, we had three hundred people in attendance, only twenty of them were our kids. We had three hundred people in attendance, they spoke together, then Corwynn took the guys down to the gym, and talked to them. Kim stayed in the auditorium, in the chapel, spoke to the girls, it was a wonderful, wonderful blessing. When we were looking for funding for that I talked to a little small group in another church, when I left they gave me one hundred dollars, they just folded up a bill and I put it in my pocket. I go to church, it's a Wednesday night, I go to church, after church I reach in my pocket, there's a hundred dollar bill, I'm like, "Thank you lord!" My friend, my best friend who used to live in Mount Vernon, now lives in Cincinnati, her mom had just passed away. She came up to get her haircut, we had dinner together, I was telling her about this event, she and I used to teach gymnastics together at the YMCA, and she left my house, I turned around, go back into the kitchen. She knocked on the door and said, "I wanna give this to you." It was a check for one thousand dollars. That's how God took care of us. When we gave Corwynn the last five hundred dollar check the night that they spoke, he turned around and handed it back to Marco, it was like God was just, it is amazing, it is truly amazing. It was a Sunday afternoon, I was in my house. I heard a knock on the door but I was by myself so I went out afterward, I was going to my friends house. I was getting in the car and there's an envelope that says Karen for The Escape Zone, I open it up and it was a three thousand dollar check. It was like, that was before we ever had this building. It was from this family whose daughter was in China, another one was getting married, and the father had cancer. I'm thinking, so much going on in their own lives and they're giving us three thousand dollars? It has just been amazing to see, I know Terry has said, we have never, I mean if the people had stopped giving this building wouldn't be where it is at today. But, Mark has given, very humbly, he's a wonderful man, and the community fund has given. It used to frustrate me because United Way will not give to religious organizations, but they always want something measurable before they give, and I understand that, everybody has to have their own things. But I said for years now, and we did our statistics for 2015, four hundred and fifty four different kids were in The Escape Zone. We averaged seventy two a night. And we don't offer anything, there's no free food. The only thing that's free is to come and play with us. You know,

it's just the space, it's just the being together. Some of these kids I've known since they were ten and now they're seventeen. We've had kids who have been coming here for years on Friday night.

MGD: How do you incorporate religion into The Escape Zone?

KB: Well that's very interesting because we don't have a sit down everybody's gonna listen to the message kinda thing. God brings us kids at the right time. Lets see, a couple weeks ago we had a brand new volunteer, she was standing down there at the end of the hallway. A young lady has a panic attack. So of course her friends get right in her face, "She's having a panic attack!!" I said, "Well get away from her then, let's deal with that!" (laughter). Angie, her daughter had panic attacks, and she went over to her and said, "Can I pray with you? My daughter used to have panic attacks." She takes a minute to pray with her and she's ok. That's how we incorporate God. No one bangs people over the head with a bible. But, we take time to pray. On Friday night we had some girls who were dealing with self esteem issues, "This boy, he's my boyfriend and hes talking with someone else!" We deal with a lot of that stuff. But to be able to come in and sit down with her and her twelve year old friend who she calls "Mom." I said, "Ok twelve year old friend 'mom,' what advice are you going to give your 'daughter' who's eleven about boys?" (laughter). Just to be able to say, "You are your own person, no one else controls your happiness. You do, and you don't have to give that away to anybody. And no eleven year old boy needs to have that kind of sway over your emotions and stuff. Let's have a word of prayer about this, Lord give this child some understand of who she is in you, and that she is valuable and worthy, and worth something not because some eleven year old boy likes her but because of who she is in you." So that's how it happens. I don't know, you guys probably weren't here, but there have been several years ago when there was a very tragic murder in Apple Valley and maybe you weren't here, there were two females and a boy, it was very awful. There was a mother and a son, and her friend, the mother's friend, the mother's friend had a son that came into The Escape Zone when all of that was going on, and my son Jacob was a teacher at the high school then, and he just came in to play pool. He just needed in all that hurt to be some place and we were able to give him that place. Everyone knew who he was, but no one talked to him about that event, just let him have his space to play. That is what it has been. We have had kids whose friends have been in car accidents, we've had children who have lost their parents. I have attended a funeral with one of them, I have gone to graduations. One of my favorite kids, his name was Trey, and he's in his twenties now and he used to come in, and a lot of these kids are mean, well they're not mean but they're the kids you wanna go, "Arghhhh" and you're pulling your hair out you know? There'd be many times when I'd have to ask him to leave. You know if you're not gonna mind, we have very few rules, if you're not gonna treat us with respect then you have to go. I can remember asking Trey, "Are you gonna walk?" He was graduating from the career center, and he said, "nah, I don't have cap and gown." So I went and got Jacob's and I said, "There will be a cap and gown for you here next week. You come in and get it." So he came in and got it and said, "I want you to come." So I went to his graduation, well I had been on a trip for school, and I got

some little coins down in Orlando, Florida, and the guy was a treasure hunter, and it said “Today could be the day.” I gave him one of those coins. For years he would come in and say, “I’ve still got that coin.” When we opened he came, and he said, “I just had to see this place. I just had to see you.” We would have kids that would come back and show us their babies, it’s like, it’s a family. When nothing else is going right, they know we’ll be here on a Friday night. Those are just some of the miracles. Last Friday night, Terry said someone handed him a check for seven thousand dollars. The amount of cameras and the security system that we’re going to put in is going to be pretty expensive, maybe ten thousand dollars. He told him there’s a house over here, not this house straight on the alley but the next one, a guy said, “I don’t have the money to fix that up, you can knock it down and use it for a parking lot.” It is the miracle story. When I tell the people at my church, there’s a lady named Ruth, and she says, “Are you writing this stuff down?” And I say, “Well, yeah, sometime.” She said, “You need to do that, you really do need to do that.” So actually it was kind of funny that you called because about a week ago, I knew she was gonna ask me again so the first line in my thing says, “In order to be able to tell Ruth that I have started, I have started the miraculous story of The Escape Zone.” Unbelievable ways, God has planted us here. These people next door and down the alley, they were thrilled to death that we took over this building. There is drugs all over. All over. But because we put lights up, and we’re gonna have cameras up, there have been a couple of break ins in garages down there, and they actually called Terry and said, “When are you putting in your security system?” I said, “Do they realize it’s gonna cover our building, not the whole neighborhood” (laughter). There has just been lots of wonderful, wonderful things like that. Some of the people who give, I should just tell you this, I’m sorry. The people who give, we have, there’s probably at least 104 churches in Knox County. There were at one point seventy youth pastors. Now you would think, and there’s more people here on a Friday night than in some of those churches. But, one of the churches who actually gives the most is out in Gambier on two hundred and twenty nine, The Community Fellowship Church. I went and talked to their mission board several years ago, and the missionary that they had sponsored was coming off the field and was retiring so he didn’t need their funding anymore. They’ve been giving two hundred and fifty dollars a month for all these years, and they don’t have a dog in the fight. You know, there’s no kids in their church that are driving clear and here to be at The Escape Zone. That’s the kind of faith that says we don’t know what God’s doing, but he’s going to do something.

CRO: It’s happening.

KB: It is happening.

Hannah Klubeck: Do you have a particular idea of what direction The Escape Zone is heading?

KB: You understand this is my vision, not anybody else’s, not the boards, this is mine. We are getting to the point we have a very large building, that needs to be used. It probably won’t be too long until we’re looking for someone who can manage the building, manage who uses it, and stuff like that. But I want a youth pastor. I want this to be their church, most of them live in this

neighborhood. I mean I stood there and watched them, they're coming down the streets, it's like, bring them in bring them in! I would like to find a youth pastor with the skills that we need because I think the kids need to know that there is someone here at bat for them all the time. Not just on Friday nights. There are people, there was a class of I think it was gonna be handicap students who were gonna use this room, but the teacher resigned or retired or something, so they're gonna use this building at some point but we're not sure how. The job and family services, the youth department that finds jobs for kids from fourteen to twenty-two will be housed in our building so they'll be here, helping our kids. And our kids, there are some of them that are really anxious to work, they need income, and so that will be something that will be housed in the building. The roller derby girls are here on Thursday night. On Saturday night from six to eight we have open gym basketball, and then Sunday night is the basketball guys who have grown up playing. So there's a lot of room for bible studies, and we'd love to have a, we used to have a, every other Sunday bible study, and Marco led that with some of our volunteers. The kids are creatures of habit so when it's every other week they forget which week it is, so that really never took off like it could have if it were an every week thing, but again that takes commitment, and we were running on very few volunteers. I would guess our volunteer list for Friday nights is now up to about forty, but not everybody can work, and they've broken it down into two hour shifts. We have probably fifteen to twenty kids from the Naz, who it is their ministry. I know that because on Friday nights, Ginny who is leading it now said, the kids get chapel credits, at the Naz they need to have so many chapels. They're allowed to get extra chapel credit, or instead of going to chapel from 10:20-11:20, if they do something else. They're called community ministry opportunities. They can only get 10 of those a semester. So Ginny said last night, Friday night, she said, "This group is different than we've ever had before, they'll come on Saturday mornings to clean the place and stuff. I know that these guys have finished all the chapel credits they can get. Like three weeks ago." I said, "Ginny, that's when it becomes ministry, when it's not about getting a two hour credit. It's not about being a social work intern, it's about giving back to the kids," and she said, "these kids mean so much to me." She was supposed to drive to Dayton to see her sister and she said, "I just don't wanna leave, I just don't wanna leave. I can stay 'til 10:30, I can drive to Dayton, I'm just gonna stay the whole night." That's the kind of people, I think in the future we will see that happen. We will see this place become some kind of youth center that includes a real spiritual emphasis. I don't mean that like what happens on Friday night isn't real, but a directed, this is, we're gonna study the bible. We have six of these girls who come on Friday nights that attend our church, and it's a wonderful blessing because they're just like I was when somebody was picking me up and taking me to a church.

MGD: Can you talk a bit about that, how you got involved in religion, because you said your parents were not?

KB: My mom grew up in a Christian home, her father was a very religious man, her brother was a pastor. My dad too, but my dad grew up in Kentucky and his father died when he was very young, of Typhoid fever, they lived really in the back hills. So when his mom left him with his

grandpa and grandma who were very strict, and very strict church goers. So he, I think, came from a background of once saved, always saved, so he never really felt like he needed to be in church. My mom would feel guilty if she smoked a cigarette because she knew her mom and dad didn't like it. Her mom died young, and so her dad was the most gracious man though. My sister was pregnant when she got married at sixteen and I remember my mom was afraid to tell my grandpa and he was the most welcoming of all, he was a wonderful man but she thought he would be so upset, and he was so wonderful. So they just, they didn't get up, but I lived two blocks, then there was like a little, we called it "the woods" but it was just like a wooded block, and then two more blocks to the church. There were three families in my church on my street who went to that church. So if I timed it right, and I was walking, they would pick me up and take me. If not, and there were some mornings when I just would walk, back then it wasn't, I mean I'm sixty-two so I was probably walking there when I was ten or so. I was saved in a vacation bible school. I can remember the story, it was about how a mother hen gathered her chicks under her because there was a fire coming, and she was burned, but when they lifted up her body, the chicks were all saved. That was kinda the story that sticks with me, I had a regular teenage life where my brother did drugs, and I drank and I caroused around, I was probably the girl most likely but my sister ended up pregnant instead of me (laughter). I graduated in three years out of highschool, was saved when I was in vacation bible school but truly committed to whatever you want when I was about fifteen, so then came to Mount Vernon and met my husband in May of '74 and we got married in July of '74. I've always been at the same church, I can remember when I was in my church as a young person I played softball, so when I came here I played softball a lot. In my church as a child, you wouldn't come into the church in shorts or pants or anything like that. So I had softball practice on Wednesday nights, but I loved Wednesday nights because that's when people testified and you heard about how God was working in their lives and stuff. So I would go to church, go downstairs, and put on a choir robe so I could sit in the service. My church sponsored me so it said Blue Ash Church of the Nazarene across my back, and I was a lot smaller then. But all these letters were those sewn on letters that are so stinkin' heavy so...it was crazy, I had the heaviest uniform of all. It was really neat that they thought enough of me to do that. I was mean to my pastor, I called him Love. Much to the grimace of his wife, I'd say, "Hey Love!" I'd point on his belly, because when he smiled he just looked like the Pillsbury Dough Boy, so I'd poke him and say, "You look like the Pillsbury Dough Boy, Love."

CRO: What do you do at Nazarene?

KB: I am the coordinator of printing and mailing. I graduated in '76, I worked in group home for teen foster girls right down here on Main Street, they didn't have foster homes that would take in teens at that point. So at one point we had nine girls that were living with us. We got to go to one of their graduation from nursing school and stand up as her parents. And I mean I was just barely older than they were. That was kind of a neat experience, and I taught gymnastics at the YMCA for about seven years, with my friend, I was just the assistant, I was not the main coach. But then

in 1984 I got a job at the Naz working with printing and mailing. Within three months, my boss left and I took over that position, and I've been that ever since. Just started my thirty-fourth year last month and I love it.

HK: Going back to Hannah and all of the stories you've told, how do you maintain a relationship that goes beyond this physical place and also throughout time?

KB: Interestingly enough they come and find me. However, in Hannah's case, she moved to a town where my daughter and son now live, and when I would go and visit them I would let her know I was coming over and we would get together at the McDonald's or whatever. When she got married, she came back here and she has always desired to be a nurse, but she's had a lot of physical issues with an ankle that was deformed at birth and whatever. So she just had surgery, she had actually started classes, but because of that had to drop out, but on Facebook, and she will call me. What was neat is, she had contacted me, one of the elderly ministers from our church, he used to be a professor, he was moving up to be with his daughter, he was like ninety years old. His wife had passed away so he was shutting down his apartment, and I had mentioned something to him at our district assembly, and he said, "I have kitchen stuff, do you think Hannah would like some kitchen stuff?" I said, "Let me call her." I said, "Hannah, do you want any kitchen stuff?" "I'd love to have some kitchen stuff." I got the kitchen stuff, I took it over to her, her bed's in the living room, because they have no furniture. I said, "why isn't your bed upstairs in the bedroom?" She said, "Because we don't have any place to sit down here." I said, "Do you need a table and chairs?" I went to my house had one on my back porch, it was from The Escape Zone. We brought that over to her. So I said something to Charles, Charles was his name, Charles Macaw. I said, "Charles, you don't happen to have any furniture do you?" He said, "Well you know I've called Hope Now, they're supposed to come tomorrow, but if they don't come." They didn't show up. I said, "Can somebody come and get this furniture for Hannah?" She got a couch she got a chair, and oh, there was like end tables and real furniture that they didn't have. Hannah again was taken care of by the church. Her car got stolen, they finally found it up in Fredericktown, my husband took them up to get it. I mean it's just, they don't leave. They don't leave.